

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 NEA-11 ISO-00 AGRE-00 CIAE-00 COME-00
EB-08 INR-10 LAB-04 NSAE-00 SP-02 STR-07 TRSE-00
FRB-03 OMB-01 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 L-03 NSC-05
PA-01 SS-15 ICA-11 SIL-01 MCT-01 SY-05 /105 W
-----087161 231735Z /45 42

R 231118Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7424
INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ELAB, PINS, PINT, SU
SUBJ: CONTINUED INDICATIONS OF LABOR UNREST IN SUDAN

1. THERE IS CONSIDERABLE CONCERN IN KHARTOUM ABOUT LABOR UNREST, PARTICULARLY IN PRIVATE SECTOR. MOST DISTURBING IS STRIKE AT SUDAN TEXTILES, WHICH IS LARGEST PRIVATE SECTOR EMPLOYER IN KHARTOUM. OVER NINE THOUSAND WORKERS ARE ON STRIKE. THEIR PRIMARY GRIEVANCE APPEARS TO BE ECONOMIC. WHEN STRIKE STARTED ON MAY 14, WORKERS OCCUPIED PLANT AND REFUSED ACCESS TO MANAGEMENT. THIS SIT-DOWN STRIKE CAUSED GREAT CONCERN AND INITIALLY THERE WERE FEARS THAT STRIKE WAS POLITICALLY MOTIVATED AND DESIGNED TO EMBARRASS GOS. HOWEVER, WORKERS AGREED TO EVACUATE MILL AFTER TWO DAYS, BUT MILL CONTINUES TO BE CLOSED.

2. THERE HAVE BEEN OTHER MORE LIMITED STRIKES IN VARIOUS PRIVATE SECTOR FIRMS. AT ONE POINT, ALL SUDANESE EMPLOYEES OF CHEVRON AT THEIR CONCESSION AREA WENT ON STRIKE. HOWEVER, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THEIR GRIEVANCES PRIMARILY CONCERNED LOCAL LIVING CONDITIONS AND SUPPLIES. THERE HAVE BEEN OTHER MINOR STRIKES BOTH IN KHARTOUM AND WAD MEDANI.

3. PUBLIC SECTOR LABOR UNREST HAS BEEN LARGELY DIFFUSED BY GOVERNMENT PROMISE TO INCREASE MINIMUM WAGE FROM LS 15 TO LS 28 PER MONTH. HOWEVER, DUE TO FISCAL AUSTERITY MEASURES

BEING ADOPTED BY GOS, IT APPEARS THAT ADJUSTMENTS IN SALARY SCALES OF OTHER THAN LOWEST PAID WORKERS WILL BE LIMITED. MEANWHILE, SUZUATION OF RAILWAYS WORKERS IN ATBARA IS NOT RESOLVED. ALTHOUGH STRIKES WHICH STARTED IN MARCH HAVE NOT REOCCURRED, THERE STILL IS CONTINUING LEADERSHIP STRUGGLE IN RAILWAY WORKERS UNION. AS PREVIOUSLY REPORTED, GOVERNMENT HAS TAKEN STRONG MEASURES TO SUPPRESS RAIL STRIKE BECAUSE OF ITS POSSIBLY DEVASTATING IMPACT ON ALREADY TROUBLED ECONOMY.

4. COMMENT. STRIKE AT SUDAN TEXTILES APPEARS TO BE MOST ILL-ADVISED FROM WORKERS POINT OF VIEW. THEIR PRIMARY ECONOMIC CONCERN SUCH ITEMS AS UNIFROMS AND VACATION BENEFITS WHICH HAVE NOT BEEN ALLOWED. BECAUSE MILL HAS BEEN OPERATING AT SUBSTANTIALLY BELOW BREAK-EVEN POINT DUE TO SHORTAGES OF RAW MATERIALS, SPARE PARTS, AND POWER, MANAGEMENT APPEARS QUITE CONTENT TO KEEP PLANT CLOSED. IN FACT, THE LOCAL OWNER (GULF INTERNATIONAL) MAY ATTEMPT TO TURN OVER OWNERSHIP OF MILL TO GOVERNMENT. SUDAN TEXTILES, IN ORDER TO MEET MONTHLY WAGE BILLS, HAS BORROWED HEAVILY FROM COMMERCIAL BANKS AND OWNERS MAY SEE GOVERNMENT TAKEOVER AS ONLY WAY FOR THEM TO STOP HUGE LOSSES. CONTINUED LABOR PROBLEMS IN PRIVATE SECTOR PROVIDE ATTRACTIVE OPPORTUNITIES FOR OPPOSITION GROUPS TO EMBARRASS PRESIDENT NIMEIRI AND CRITICIZE CURRENT ECONOMIC POLICIES. THUS FAR, THERE HAS BEEN PRACTICALLY NO LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF LABOR PROBLEMS IN MEDIA.

4. WE HAVE JUST LEARNED THAT STRIKE HAS ENDED AT SUDAN TEXTILE. REPORTEDLY, GOS TOOK STRONG ROLE IN PURSUADING WORKERS TO RETURN TO WORK.
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